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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 8101
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUCNMGH/MAGHREB COLLECTIVE PRIORITY
RUEHDO/AMEMBASSY DOHA PRIORITY 0378
RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 0435
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 0779
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 1977
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN PRIORITY 0455
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE PRIORITY
RHMFISS/COMSOCEUR VAIHINGEN GE PRIORITY
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY
RUEHDS/USMISSION USAU ADDIS ABABA PRIORITY
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SUBJECT: MEDIA AND POLITICAL PARTIES REACT TO AU-IMPOSED SANCTIONS
ON MAURITANIA

REF: ADDIS ABABA 332

¶1. (U) Reactions among the Mauritanian media and political class to sanctions imposed by the African Union on February 5 (Reftel) fell predictably along existing fault lines. Pro-coup media and political parties condemned the sanctions, while anti-coup forces largely welcomed the targeted sanctions. The following is a sample of the reactions.

¶2. (U) The pro-coup Hatem party released a communique that was covered in the state-run "Horizons" newspaper. Hatem declared its "complete rejection... of any sanction, partial or total, imposed from outside." Hatem further pledged its support to the High State Council, and stated that any external interference in the affairs of Mauritania was an "attack on its sovereignty and its independence."

¶3. (U) The sometimes pro-coup, sometimes anti-coup RFD president Ahmed Ould Daddah fell squarely into the pro-coup camp regarding sanctions. In an interview with the "Nouakchott Info Quotidien" newspaper, Daddah stated "We are opposed to any blockade on Mauritania." Furthermore, "We consider Mauritania's problems to be its own problems, not somebody else's... This is an internal matter that must bring together all Mauritaniens, and must not be exported outside of the country in order to find solutions through international organizations."

¶4. (U) The anti-coup "Le Renovateur" newspaper led with a front-page headline of "The Axe Falls!" Stating that "the firmness of the AU was stunning at a moment when many doubted their intentions," the story went on to evoke the possibility of further sanctions: "Eventually, the junta will have to confront the adversity of the Americans, Africans, Europeans, and some Arab countries."

¶5. (U) Secretary General Ladji Traore of the APP party (and FNDD member) came out swinging in an interview with the "Le Renovateur" newspaper. Saying that "Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz's days in power are numbered," Traore went on to say Aziz and his supporters are "extremely worried... These are sanctions targeting certain individuals, certain military and civilian personalities."

¶6. (U) The "L'Eveil Hebdo" weekly newspaper took a cautious tone regarding sanctions: "Reactions varied from one camp to another, but what seems new is that nobody no longer doubts the disastrous consequences of sanctions for a country like ours. The differences lie rather in terms of their timeliness and appropriateness. In any case, between the risks of radicalizing the junta, a possible easing of tensions, and an improbable compromise, one at least can be sure

that the worst is yet to come."

17. (U) Ba Mamadou Alassane, president of the PLEJ party and FNDD member, maintained that "it is the junta in power and at its head, the general, who are solely responsible for the sanctions. These sanctions were entirely predictable because General Mohamed Ould Abdel Aziz never wanted to submit to the demands of the African Union, who always called for a return to constitutional order."

18. (U) Cheikhna Haidara, president of the "Rally of Civil Society Organizations for a United and Democratic Mauritania" (ROSCUD) argued that "internal problems must be fixed here and not by intervening international organizations. We are therefore against all sanctions, no matter their nature."

19. (U) Sarr Mamadou Moctar, Executive Secretary of the human rights organization FONADH stated that "FONADH assesses that the settlement of this political crisis involves the return of constitutional order. As a civil society organization, we oppose any seizure of power by force. The junta is responsible for these sanctions because it continues to stubbornly remain in charge of the country against the popular will."

HANKINS